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AN
ANSWER
TO
DAVID HUME,
AND OTHERS,
ON THE
SUBJECT
OF
LIBERTY AND NECESSITY,
PROVIDENCE,
AND
A FUTURE STATE.

L O N D O N:

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A N S W E R
T O
D A V I D H U M E, &c.

B EING some time since in company with persons who highly praised the Essay on the Immutability of Truth, in answer to the Sceptical Opinions of Hume, I was induced to read a treatise on which men of sense had lavished such encomiums. Looking into it, however, I was surprised to observe, that instead of reasoning, the author had merely cavilled against his opinions; that instead of refuting, he had

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never

never met him in argument; that he had established an arbitrary tribunal of his own erection, and tried his adversary by laws with which he was unacquainted. Now, as I had ever deemed it to be the first law of argumentation, that the respondent should shew a fallacy either in the premises or the conclusions of his antagonist, I was vastly disappointed at perceiving that Dr. Beattie had neglected the system of Hume, and had, by declamations, attempted to prejudice mankind against it, as containing doctrines pernicious to society.

Having ever respected Mr. Hume for his uncommon abilities, having ever loved the man for the known goodness of his heart, and being prepossessed in favour of his principles, as generally coinciding with those of Mr. Locke, I sat down to take a review of his Essays,

says, without the least prejudice against them. If, said I, he can prove that I am merely an Ephemeris, let me know and be content with my humble destination ; let my bark glide smoothly through the sea of life, its steady course not being impeded by the alternate tides of contrariant opinions, and let Hume pilot the vessel into the harbour of hopeless tranquillity, since Dr. Beattie has proved incapable of conducting her to the Fortunate Islands. *

Thus disposed, I began to read Hume's Essays, studious of truth alone; in whatever form it appeared ; but, though devoid of all prejudice against him, I proceeded with caution, convinced by my own experience that he was an acute, and assured by others that he was a sophistical reasoner. Ad-

* The ancients imagined them to be the habitation of the blessed,

vancing, however, in the work, I was pleased to find that a continued chain of argument pervaded the whole, and to observe that he laid down his principles with the utmost clearness and precision, proving them by arguments whose genuine force disclaimed the paltry assistance of delusion: I therefore speedily began to conceive, not only that his principles were well founded, but that they were the only basis of sound reasoning on those subjects.

Having paid this tribute of well-deserved applause to the memory of a man equally distinguished by wisdom and virtue, I may now, without apprehension of imputed annoyance or malevolence, take the liberty of supposing (a liberty which, were he alive, he would readily allow me) that in drawing his conclusions, certain circumstances escaped him, which ought to have

have been considered in the discussion of such important questions, and from a proper attention to which he would have deduced consequences diametrically opposite to those which he has laboured to establish.

In order to prosecute the present disquisition with all possible candor, I shall, in the first place, offer to the reader, a short extract from the principles of Mr. Hume, and, in the next, shall attempt to shew that different conclusions naturally flow from them. In the whole of this enquiry, I shall treat him with that proper respect and delicacy which should subsist between friends; shall never carp at his terms, but investigate his meaning; and shall strive to give his arguments the utmost degree of force, which they are capable of receiving.

PRINCIPLES *laid down by* HUME.

This elegant and ingenious author begins his system, by remarking the striking difference which subsists between the first lively effects, excited in the mind by the presence of such objects as act immediately on the senses, and that more faint recollection of them, which is treasured up in the memory; to the former of these he gives the name of impression, (though perception might perhaps be more applicable to it) * marking the latter by the old term, Idea: in this instance, he must be allowed to have acted like a
found

* As this expression conveys no distinction between the various processes of the mind in acquiring her notions of things, I shall take the liberty of defining terms for myself. The action of the object on the sentient extremities, may be denominated an impression; the communication of this impression to the brain by the nerves, and the effect produced then, may be called a sensation; and the subsequent operation of this in the mind, may be deemed a perception.

found philosopher and a judicious critic. It is absurd to assert that our first impressions, or perceptions, are real images of surrounding objects, and of course the term (idea) is improperly applied to them : it is certain that the recollected notion, though not so lively, is an exact resemblance of the first impression or perception, and consequently this word most happily expresses it, being a likeness to the thought, not to the thing which excited it. He then deduces the origin of our ideas from the source of sensation, evincing the truth of his position by two unanswerable arguments : in the first place, however compounded they may at a transient view appear, they are all capable of being resolved into such simple ideas as were copied from a preceding feeling or sentiment ; in the second, if you find any person who was deprived from his birth of any organ of sense,

sense, you will perceive the impossibility of communicating to him those ideas, with which the minds of men, enjoying the use of it, are furnished.

He proceeds from this to consider the association of our ideas, establishing three principles of connection between them, viz. resemblance, contiguity, and causation. (A)

Our author next divides all objects of the human intellect into relations of ideas and matters of fact.

The former of these retain their evidence, independent on any matter of fact which is conformable to them ;
the

The lines referred to by capital letters are literal quotations.

(A) That these three principles serve to connect ideas, will not, I believe, be doubted ; a picture naturally leads our thoughts to the original, the mention of one apartment in a building, naturally introduces an enquiry or discourse concerning the other ; and if we think of a wound, we can scarcely forbear reflecting on the pain which follows it.

the latter are by no means ascertained in the same manner, nor is our conviction of their truth similar to that which accompanies the foregoing. (B)

In consequence, therefore, of this seeming uncertainty, with regard to matters of fact, he thinks it necessary to enquire into the nature of that evidence, on which we depend for the truth of such things, as are beyond the present testimony of our senses, or the records of our memory.

Now all reasoning, concerning matter of fact, seems to be founded on the relation of cause and effect : if therefore we would wish to satisfy ourselves concerning the nature of the evidence

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afforded

(B) The contrary of every matter of fact is still possible, because it never can imply a contradiction, and is conceived by the mind with the same facility and distinctness, as if it were ever so conformable to reality.

afforded by the former, we must enquire how we arrive at the knowledge of the latter. He insists that the knowledge of this relation is not, in any instance, acquired by reasoning *a priori*, evincing the truth of it by the most irresistible arguments : it will not, however, be necessary, at present, to repeat them, as all reasoning *a priori*, turns on the properties of things which have no real existence, and whose essence is formed by the intellect alone. To habit (C) then, we must attribute all our conclusions

(C) Custom, then, is the great guide of human life. It is that principle alone which renders our experience useful to us, and makes us expect for the future a similar train of events to those which have appeared in the past. But here it may be proper to remark, that though our conclusions from experience carry us beyond our memory and senses, and assure us of matters of fact, which happened in the most distant places and the most remote ages ; yet some fact must always be present to the senses or memory, from which we may first proceed in drawing these conclusions. A man who should find, in a desert country, the remains of pompous buildings, would conclude that the country had, in ancient times, been

conclusions concerning matters of fact, enforcing the cause from a customary connection between it and the effect. From this we are led to the consideration of verisimilitude. All reasoning is, by Hume, divided into demonstrations, proofs, and probabilities—by proofs, meaning such arguments from experience, as leave no room for doubt or opposition.(D) Whenever, therefore, the

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cause

been cultivated by civilized inhabitants ; but did nothing of this nature occur to him, he could never form such an inference. What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter ? a simple one ; though it must be confessed pretty remote from the common theories of philosophy. All belief of matter of fact, or real existence, is derived from some object present to the memory or senses, and a customary conjunction between that and some other object.

(D) There are some causes which are entirely uniform and constant in producing a particular effect, and no instance has ever yet been found of any failure or irregularity in their operation. Fire has ever burned, and water suffocated, every human creature : the production of motion by impulse and gravity is an universal law, which has hitherto admitted of no exception.

cause and effect have been constantly conjoined, we expect the latter from the former with the utmost assurance : but when, at several times, the former is found disjoined from the latter, we are then obliged to compare the instances on the one side and the other, judging of the event according to the majority.

Our author next asserts, that there is, in no particular instance of cause
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tion. But there are other causes which have been found more irregular and uncertain ; nor has rhubarb proved always a purge, or opium a soporific to every person who has taken these medicines. Being determined by custom to transfer the past to the future in all our inferences ; where the past has been entirely regular and uniform, we expect the event with the greatest assurance, and leave no room for any contrary supposition. But where different effects have been found to follow from causes which are to appearance exactly similar, all those various effects must occur to the mind in transferring the past to the future, and enter into our consideration whenever we determine the probability of the event.

and effect in external objects, any thing which could suggest the idea of power or necessary connection between them.

(E) When we reflect on the operations of our own mind, he shews, in like manner, that we are incapable of deriving any such idea from that source, since the connection between volition and voluntary motion in ourselves, is equally the result of experience, with that which subsists between cause and effect in every other part of nature.

He also elucidates each position by a variety of instances ; but it will not be necessary to offer them to the reader, as the truth of each must clearly appear from what has been already observed, with respect to the ideas, concerning

(E) Any quality which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other ; we only find that the one does actually in fact follow the other.

cerning which our reasoning, *a priori*, must be exercised.

He proceeds, in the last place, to enquire into the nature of Liberty and Necessity, establishing as a principle that the conjunction between motives and voluntary actions, is as constant and uniform, as that between cause and effect in external objects, and that of course Liberty consists in the power of acting or not acting, according to the determinations of the will, which determinations are founded on the motives. (F)

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(F) For what is meant by liberty when applied to voluntary actions? surely we cannot suppose actions to have so little connexion with motives, inclinations, and circumstances, that the one does not follow with a certain degree of uniformity from the other, and that the one affords no inference by which we can conclude the existence of the other. By liberty, then, we can only mean the power of acting or not acting according to the determinations of the will. If liberty be opposed to necessity,

The ingenious author next glides from the establishment of his principles into other opinions, which he introduces in the following manner: I pretend not, says he, to have obviated or removed all objections to this theory, with respect to Liberty and Necessity. I can foresee other objections, derived from topics which have not been here treated of.—It may be said, for instance, that if voluntary actions be submitted to the same laws of necessity with the operations of matter, there is a continued chain of necessary causes, pre-ordained and pre-determined, reaching from the original cause of all, to every single volition of every human creature: no contingency any where in the universe—no indifference—no liberty: while we act, we are, at the same time,

acted

necessity, and not to constraint, it is the same thing with chance, which is universally allowed to have no existence.

acted upon. The ultimate author of all our volitions is the Creator of the World, who first bestowed motion on this immense machine, and placed all things in that particular position, whence every subsequent event, by an inevitable necessity, must result. Human actions, therefore, either can have no moral turpitude at all, as proceeding from so good a cause; or if they have any turpitude, they must involve our Creator in the same guilt, while he is acknowledged to be their ultimate cause and author.

Now as this argument tends to deny the goodness of God, and as he, who refuses to allow any one attribute of the Divine Nature, may with reason be considered as disowning the Deity, I shall attempt to evince the existence and attributes of this august Being, *a posteriori*, the only mode of reasoning which

which our present plan admits, before I examine the conclusiveness of it.

Our experience convinces us, that all animals are of a short lived and perishable nature, and that generation continually supplies a new race to fill up the places which their parents had occupied : either then this chain of beings must have continued through the eternity past, or there must have been some extrinsic cause of their existence.

Now I demand, in the first place, if mankind has existed from eternity, how comes it to pass that we have never heard of him till within these few thousand years ? How can we conceive that the same reason has lain intirely dormant thro' an eternity past, which awaking at length, and without any assignable cause from its slumber, has,

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within

within a few thousand years, performed such wonders? Push back the existence of our species as far as the Egyptians, Persians, Chaldeans, Chinese, or Indians, have dreamed it, still do you make such an inconsiderable addition to the date of man's origin, as bears the same proportion to an eternity past, that a mathematical point does to the universe? If it be said that the world has undergone a variety of changes, similar to that occasioned by the deluge, which destroyed the greater part of its inhabitants, and reduced the remainder to the state of savages, equally unacquainted with arts and sciences; I reply that by such a supposition, the followers of Hume intirely deviate from his principles, which tie them down to acknowledge no event to have taken place, unless their own experience, or that of others perfectly well authenticated, has furnished them with an instance

stance of a similar nature. Now no history, except the Jewish, has mentioned an universal, or even general deluge, and the inspired writer of this has announced the existence of God with the same authority that he has asserted the destruction of mankind ; consequently, if you give credit to it in the one respect, you are, by the same reason, bounden to believe it in the other, and if you deny the testimony of it, there is no foundation on which you can ground your hypothesis. The reveries of natural historians will little avail in the present dispute. The strata of shells, found in several hills at a distance from the sea, might perhaps, as Goldsmith imagines, have been produced in the fresh water, or if that may seem a contradiction to common experience, still do our antagonists derive no advantage from it, since both reason and observation constantly announce,

that there has ever subsisted an exact equilibrium between the sea and land ; and that, if at any time the former has inundated a particular country, it has left bare a proportional part, which had been formerly subject to its dominion.

Our opponents may next assert, that barbarous nations like the Goths, Heruli and Huns, may have ravaged the earth, and have totally destroyed every vestige of science ; but this supposition is equally inconsistent with the principles of Hume, since no history has mentioned an universal conquest to have been made by any people, and consequently, as the cause was but partial, the effects must have been but partial, and science must have been but partially injured. But not content with negative, history furnishes us with positive proofs in contradiction to this opinion,

opinion, uniformly asserting, that as science decayed in one part, it flourished in another; as it declined in the West, it reared up its head in the East; and, as it was extinguished by the religious disputes which subsisted between the Emperors and the Monks at Constantinople, it revived under the tolerating government of the Caliphs at Bagdat.

Thus it appears, that if men have existed from eternity, their reason has lain dormant till within a few thousand years; that we cannot impute this effect to any sufficient cause, since history warrants no general destruction of the human species, either by physical or moral agents, consequently man must, within these few thousand years, have arisen without a cause, or must have been indebted to some other Being for his existence.

That

That the world derived its origin from the same cause which gave existence to man, is also perfectly evident, since otherwise you must allow two self-existent independent principles, one of which, notwithstanding, gives new modifications and qualities to the other *, which is a palpable contradiction in terms. That this Being cannot, with reason, be deemed the soul of the world, admits

* We see nothing in this world but matter, and we prove the Deity from the absolute necessity there is for such a Being, in order to produce the effects which we perceive. We observe certain kinds of matter to be inert, and also find, that by death and corruption even men may be resolved into such matter; hence we fairly infer this property to be essential to it, and that action and knowledge are the effects of man's modification. These effects we must ascribe to the modifier, as their cause, since that which is inert cannot produce action; we must consider knowledge and action as attributes of this modifier, for the reason now assigned, and of course must establish two Beings essentially different. These must either be independent, or one of them must be derived from the other. But a perfect Being cannot proceed from imperfection, and therefore they are either independent, or God has created matter.

admits not a doubt, since on this supposition the connexion between them must have been necessary and eternal ; consequently all the effects which this mind, God, acting on this body, Matter, is capable of producing, must have taken place from an eternity past, and of course mankind must have eternally existed, the absurdity of which has been already evinced.

Now into these two suppositions may the opinions of all the philosophers, whether ancients, who never dreamed of, or moderns, who have ventured to deny, a creation, be ultimately resolved ; the existence of a God, the Creator of the Universe, must therefore be acknowledged. We need but open our eyes to be convinced of some of the attributes of God ; we have already evinced that wisdom and action were properties of the Deity, and this was shewn from
 observation

observation of the powers we possess ;
 I shall now, therefore, prove them
 from a contemplation of the Universe.

If we examine this earth, our own immediate habitation, we shall find the most regular uniformity in her general and specific productions, joined to the most pleasing variety in them, when contrasted with each other ; at one time we are amazed at the vast objects which surround us, and the next instant find ourselves equally astonished at the no less admirable minuteness of creation ; who then can reflect on this without confessing the wisdom and power of the Author ? If we extend our inquiries to the planetary system, we shall perceive those vast bodies to observe the utmost regularity in their revolutions round the common center of attraction, the first visible dispenser of life and light. But how are we lost
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in amazement when we find that those stars, which to our eyes appear as mere sparks, are in reality so many suns? when analogy points out that they are surrounded by their attendant worlds, and that each is furnished with a variety of creatures widely different, perhaps, in their nature and properties from those which our earth is observed to support? Can we then doubt that the august Being, who, by the energy of his will gave existence to such vast variety of worlds, who preserves their interior œconomy with the utmost exactness, and regulates their motions, with regard to external objects, by laws which are equally invariable with their Author, must be possessed both of wisdom and power infinite? But if the Deity has been pleased to afford us, *a posteriori*, the most evident proofs of some of his attributes, he has in appearance drawn, either partially or ge-

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nerally;

nerally, a veil over others, and denied to us the power of investigating them by the senses. Thus has it fared with the goodness and justice of God: but though we have no sufficient evidence of these attributes, *a posteriori*, I shall now attempt to shew, that a little reflection offers to us a demonstration of their existence.

Here I must observe that, though Hume's mode of reasoning does not allow us to deduce any quality in the cause, unless from the effect; yet having established any attribute of the Deity in this manner, we may fairly infer that nothing, inconsistent with it, can possibly exist. The First Cause of all things must possess his attributes by a necessity of nature, since there is no other Being from whom he could derive them, and of course he must either be essentially benevolent or malevolent; but

but Omniscience and Omnipotence necessarily include perfect felicity in the Being who possesses them, since Infinite Wisdom must point out, and Infinite Power must enable him to attain, whatever most effectually conduces to his happiness. If supreme beatitude flows from those attributes, it also supposes them as its origin ; of course, therefore, where the cause cannot be found, the effect cannot possibly be supposed to subsist. Hence it follows that the Deity, though infinitely benevolent, could not communicate supreme felicity to any being, without rendering it, at the same time, Omniscient and Omnipotent. It is, however, very certain, that if the Deity were infinitely malevolent, he could inflict perfect misery on his creatures, without divesting himself, in any degree, of his sole title to the above-mentioned attributes. The Deity therefore must be acknowledged essen-

tially benevolent, though he has not bestowed perfect felicity on his creatures, since that could not be effected without rendering them Gods. Justice is also connected by an absolute necessity with the nature of the Deity ; for his benevolence having inclined him to give, to certain creatures, reason, as a rule directing them to the attainment of good, and the avoidance of evil, his Omniscience must enable him to perceive each compliance with, and each infraction of it, while his Omnipotence must render him capable of rewarding the one, and of punishing the other : we may therefore, with the strictest reason conclude that he is just, since no Being, even of common understanding, would give laws to another, merely with the view of having them transgressed. Having proved certain attributes of the Divinity, *a posteriori*, and having demonstrated others, by a necessary connection

nection with them, I proceed now to shew that human actions cannot be traced by a necessary chain to the Deity as their cause, and in order to evince it, am obliged to make some more particular inquiries, concerning the Nature of God, of Matter, and of the different kinds of material beings existing in this world.

I have already proved the Omniscience of the Deity; and it must appear very evident to any person, who reflects for a moment on this attribute, that the knowledge possessed by this august Being, of every thing, in every portion of infinite duration, must be, both in its nature and mode of acquisition, essentially different from the knowledge of man; for he must actually, and at every moment, comprehend each action and consequence thereof; since if there was a succession of ideas in the Divine mind,

mind, while one train was present, another must be absent, and thus the universality of his perception must be destroyed. The Omnipotence of the Deity has been also evinced, but this attribute implies the power of acting on every thing in nature at the same moment of time, otherwise he could not effect all purposes. Infinite knowledge and energy are therefore adherences in the Divine Nature, nor can they admit any limitation, unless with respect to things, which would involve a contradiction. That the Deity is not material is exceedingly apparent : if allowed independent principles, they cannot be the same thing ; if God has given existence to matter, the Creator cannot be one entity with his creature : but waving all this, if we can suppose for a moment the Divinity to be corporeal, from that moment we shall have two bodies possessing the same space. Since God is not
material,

material, we are obliged to oppose to and contrast with each other, these two only beings existing in the universe, asserting that whatever property is found constantly in the latter, must ever prove incompatible with the former. Now we find every thing material to be extended, to consist of solid and separable parts, with certain passive capacities: the Deity therefore must not be extended, must not consist of solid and separable parts, and must possess certain active energies. Such a Being then we denominate a Spirit, and though incapable of conceiving any thing of this kind, from the many absurdities which follow the negation of it, we with the greatest certainty infer its existence. This Being (as has been already shewn) possessing an intuitive knowledge of all things in every portion of eternity, so far as it does not imply a contradiction; and his infinite

finite power enabling him to effect whatever appears to be the object of his volition, he is obliged, by his perfections, to act in conformity with a moral necessity.

Inert matter, on the other hand, is in a state of absolute imperfection, devoid of life, of sensation, of energy, and receiving such laws as the Deity has prescribed. These laws are ever invariably obeyed : never does impulse fail to communicate motion in proportion to the momentum of the impelling body ; nor does action fail to produce, on every occasion, its contrariant re-action, and thus do its defects compel it to conform to an extrinsically imposed physical necessity.— Between inert matter and man, there are found an immense variety of beings, gradually ascending each above the other, and exhibiting different, though almost

almost imperceptible degrees of perfection. Between man and God, imagination has continued the same visionary chain, and filled the heavens with a vast number of intelligences, each species superior to the other in endowments. Now, in whatever degrees these perfections are superadded to all material creatures, until we pass man, in the same shall we perceive them to deviate from the unerring obedience of the *caput mortuum*, and not conform to the purposes for which they seem designed. If, for instance, we attend to such things as are endued with vegetable life, we shall find that they do not invariably obey their laws, and that certain conditions are necessary to enforce their compliance with them : not every tree naturally fructiferous, produces fruit at the accustomed season ; not every grain, when sown in the ground, pullulates into life, and gratifies

tifies our hopes of a plenteous increase ; and thus is a contingency substituted for an absolute constraint.

If we examine beings endowed with animal life, in proportion to the additional perfections which they possess, shall we find a still greater infraction of their general laws ? Instinct was given brutes in order to direct them to proper objects of appetite, yet do they sometimes contradict nature in this most essential point, and thereby bring into existence a variety of monsters. But instinct is not the only principle perceivable in these creatures ; for we can observe one of an opposite nature, which frequently contradicts it ; the former generally prompts them to the pursuit of the same object, but experience, notwithstanding, has power to correct and regulate the violence of the impulse. Thus the setting dog is instinctively

instinctively inclined to run in on his game, and attempt to catch it, but let frequent sufferings impress on his memory that a severe beating is to be the consequence of this action, and he will stand obedient at the distance he is commanded.

I shall not dispute about the name which should be given to this faculty; but it is indubitably contrary to instinct, which hurries on those creatures to act like inorganic matter, according to an extrinsically imposed necessity. In man we may perceive powers superior to those of beasts: in him, as in them, instinct is very forcible, and directs him to pursue pleasure and to avoid pain; but whereas they are capable of having their appetites directed by a limited experience, and in a few instances only he possesses the faculty of tracing effects to their causes, through a long series

of events, of foreseeing things to come in the past, and of sacrificing his desire of present gratification to his hopes of future good. Instinct or passion, then, directs us, by the allurements of pleasure, to the pursuit of present and apparent good; reason or experience frequently restrains us from obeying the impulse, by representing that it may be attended with evil in future, or may prevent us from the attainment of a still greater advantage.

Were man, therefore, capable of perceiving, by intuition, all the consequences of his actions, he would derive from this knowledge a moral necessity of action, since all beings covet what is good and avoid what is evil; were he, on the contrary, at all times hurried into action by his passions, he would then obey an impetus equally blind with that of matter. Now man is, in this
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intermediate state, between an extrinsically imposed physical, and a self-imposed moral necessity of action, and in this does his liberty consist; for, as Hume justly observes, liberty should ever be opposed to constraint, and not to necessity; one species of necessity should ever, indeed, be opposed to the other, and liberty be considered as the intermediate state. What does it consist in? in what Hume has made it consist, viz. in the power of acting, or not acting, according to the determinations of the will, which determinations are founded on the motives derived from the contrariant principles of passion and reason. As we find that each of these principles acquires strength by exercise, and that if we indulge our passions for a long time, they finally obtain an almost absolute dominion over us; but that, if we cultivate our reason, it gains force every day, and enables

enables us to abolish the tyranny of passion. As the one debases, and the other elevates mankind, it is exceedingly evident that the perfection of liberty consists in an approach to a moral, and the degradation of it in a tendency to a physical necessity of action. Now, I think, this explanation of liberty affords an answer to the supposition of Mr. Hume, concerning the physical necessity of human actions, and also to his conclusion concerning the imputableness of them to God. The hypothesis is false, since human actions have been shewn to acknowledge the dominion of no kind of necessity, and the premises overturned, the inference must necessarily fall to the ground.

But before I quit this subject, I am obliged to observe, that by imputing criminality to the ultimate author, Mr.

Hume.

Hume has fallen into a very notable error: for there is a wide difference between asserting God to be immediately, and maintaining him to be ultimately, the author of our volitions.— That we have derived the power of willing from God is exceedingly evident; but it is at the same time no less contrary to reason, to make the Deity our immediate director in each particular exertion of it.

Pere Malebranche, wishing to exalt the power of the Deity, asserts that every thing proceeds immediately from him; that our very ideas are in him, and independent on his action, cannot be the modification of a created mind: this opinion is, however, exceedingly derogatory from the Divine Majesty, and ultimately tends to consequential
Atheism,

Atheism, * from which it seems to have been originally derived.

The Stoics, who maintained God to be the fatal necessity of all things, denied however that he was the immediate author of evil, but Malebranche represents him as immediately engaged in every act of moral turpitude: for as all our ideas are immediately derived from God, it is evident that we cannot prevent the reception of them; but, according to Malebranche, while the idea exists in the mind, it absolutely modifies it in such a manner, that the latter could no more exist without such an inclination, than the human body could exist, as such, without a particular form. This opinion appears to have arisen from the system of Democritus, who maintained that the world was composed

* By rendering God the immediate author of evil.

posed of atoms ; and to obviate the necessity of a first mover, independent on matter, and to avoid the absurdity of asserting that life and sensation proceeded from the senseless mass, supposed each atom to be endued with an animating principle. When he therefore announces the images conveyed by our senses, and the ideas in our minds to be gods, he only acts in conformity with his hypothesis ; since these sensations and notions were the immediate effect of action in the animæ, to which he gave the appellation of the Divinity. Having shewn both the absurdity and origin of Malebranche's doctrine, I shall insert an extract from Hume, in order to prove that he perfectly coincides with me in rejecting this opinion.

“ Thus, according to these philosophers, every thing is full of God. Not content with the principle that

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nothing

nothing exists but by his will, that nothing possesses any power but by his concession, they rob nature and all created beings of every power, in order to render their dependence on the Deity more sensible and immediate. They consider not, that by this theory, they diminish the grandeur of those attributes which they affect so much to celebrate. It argues surely more power in the Deity to delegate a certain portion of it to inferior creatures, than to produce every thing by his own immediate volition. It argues more wisdom to contrive, at first, the fabric of the world with such perfect foresight, that of itself, and by its own proper operation, it may serve all the purposes of Providence, than if the great Creator were obliged, every moment, to adjust its parts, and animate by his breath the wheels of that stupendous machine."

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It is very evident from this passage, that Mr. Hume did not consider the Deity as immediately interfering in the government of the world; God, therefore, must be deemed the author of our actions ultimately, or so far only as he has given us the power of volition and action, and not as he has in any shape influenced us in either operation, since this supposition would substitute constraint for liberty, would render the will impertinent and motives nugatory. But Mr. Hume clearly perceived that the consideration of the Divinity, as the ultimate cause and author of human actions, would by no means prove sufficient to render him a partaker in their criminality; he therefore changes his expression afterwards, demanding how the Deity can be the mediate cause of all the actions of men, without being the author of sin and moral turpitude.

Now here I must observe, that our author has not used the terms, mediate cause, with his accustomed accuracy ; and the person who recollects that liberty consists in the power of acting, or not acting, according to the determinations of the will, that these determinations are founded on the motives, and that these motives are derived from the opposite principles of passion and reason, will clearly perceive that the Deity is only the ultimate cause of our actions, that the choice is the immediate, and the motives the mediate, cause. But the followers of Hume may perhaps still assert, that, though God is not actually the author of evil, yet must he be considered as such by permission. They may demand, why a Being, infinitely good and powerful, did not give existence to such creatures only as were capable of perfect freedom from natural or moral evil ? Now to gratify

gratify these gentlemen, quitting my usual mode of reasoning, and the world of realities, I shall venture to follow them into the fairy land of hypothesis; but though I accompany them in this excursion, I shall answer their suppositions on such principles alone as are derived from a knowledge of the two kinds of beings in nature, material and spiritual, the former of which our senses announce, and the latter is deduced, as a *sine qua non*, by our reason. These creatures must then be pure spirits, something between spirit and matter, intelligences superior to humanity, yet, notwithstanding, material or men: for I presume that no person will suppose it an act of benevolence in God to have excluded all evil, by creating only senseless and inert matter. If we suppose them pure spirits, we must ascribe to them all the attributes that are essential to spirit.

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I have already shewn that the Deity is not extended, that he does not consist of parts, and that he possesses certain active powers : I have also evinced that the qualities of thought, knowledge, and action, which we perceive in ourselves, are in us mere faculties, granted to us by God, who possesses a knowledge of all things, not by thought but intuition ;—who acts on every thing, not in consequence of his will, but his energy and volition form one act. This then is the essence of spirit : but the essential qualities of any thing are perfectly incapable of intensification or remission, of increase or diminution : * such a being therefore must be capable of knowing and acting on all things ; consequently every pure spirit must be a God. †

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* *Essentia rei nec intenditur nec remittitur salvo subiecto*, is a maxim.

* This is sufficiently clear to persons who are tolerably acquainted with metaphysics ; but as prejudice may incline

I am next to inquire, whether God could have entirely excluded evil, by creating beings which were intermediate

cline many men to suppose the human soul a spirit, as this opinion may be fostered by Mr. Locke's definition of real Essences, and may be confirmed by his assertion, that we derive our idea of spirit from a recollection on the operations of our own minds. I shall attempt to shew that both are ill founded. Mr. Locke, in the first place, very improperly defines real essence to be that internal unknown constitution of the parts, on which the properties depend; the real essence of spirit being therefore unknown, we can determine what is spiritual by the nominal essence alone, or that collection of properties evinced by experience, and marked by a name. This great philosopher, in the next place, maintains, that by reflection we acquire a notion of spirit; according to which assertion, if well founded, knowledge and action, such as they exist in us, must be properties of spirit; and as in man they are capable of increase and diminution, so would it follow that they are in spirits, and of course that the latter could be limited. Now the definition of a real essence is perfectly inapplicable to unmodified matter, or the *Materia Prima*, and to spirit, nor is it suited to any thing, unless in a state of generation or corruption; for instance, inorganic matter exhibits no properties but extension, solidity, and gravity, with some passive capacities; these are not the consequence of any arrangement of its parts, since none has taken place, but seem to be the first laws of its existence

diate between spirit and matter. Now it is very evident, from what has been observed, that God cannot communicate

tence, imposed by its Creator. It is equally absurd when applied to spirit, since one of the attributes which necessity evinces it to possess, is, that it does not consist of parts; to suppose, then, that the properties depend on the unknown constitution of parts which do not exist, must be allowed to be a palpable contradiction; and yet God must be a substance, or the unknown something which supports known qualities. The reader must recollect, that I have already shewn knowledge and action in the Deity to be essentially different from those properties in man, though Mr. Locke, to favour his assertion, maintains, that we have an intuitive knowledge of our own existence, a sensitive of external objects, and a demonstrative of God; but a little reflection will evince, that our knowledge of our own existence is derived from the senses; for these being destroyed, what perception of our existence will remain? We may, indeed, according to the manner of reasoning used by Des Cartes—(I think therefore I am) obtain a demonstrative knowledge of our existence; but I shall appeal to any person, whether it adds any force to our conviction: nay, what can be a stronger argument against the possibility of our conceiving intuition than this, that so great a man has confounded it with sensation. From this we may conclude that God and pure spirit imply the same thing; and of course, if there are two pure spirits, there must be two Gods:

cate perfect felicity, without granting at the same time Omniscience and Omnipotence : here then would be a being, which was not God, with the essential attributes of the Divinity.

I shall now examine the nature of intermediate material creatures, beginning with that species which makes the nearest approaches to the qualities of inert matter.

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Gods : but exclusive of this contradiction, how could the Deity unite the contrariant principles of spirit and matter in man, or how could he punish the former for the defects of the latter ? But suppose a pure spirit created, and at the moment of its existence united with matter, allowing also that the laws of their union prevented it from displaying its essential properties, still must this union cease at death, and every pure spirit then become a God. Is it not more consistent with piety to suppose the Deity a single being in the universe, and essentially different from all his creatures, than to imagine that he created a number of pure spirits, even were this notion devoid of contradiction, which differed from him in the degree of possessing their essential properties, but not in their essence.

There is such a creature as Man, whose body consists of perishable materials, and wants constant supplies : this body is also liable to various injuries from external objects, and is threatened with dissolution from every thing that surrounds it. Now to such a creature, I assert, that natural evil, or positive pain, is absolutely necessary. I shall not, however, attempt to shew, that man was requisite, as a link in the great chain of Plato, reaching from inert matter up to the throne of God, but shall conclude, from his existence, that it was fit he should be. Were not man then, excited by the disagreeable sensation attendant on emptiness, to procure a support for his perishable body in a few days after the creation of the species, it must have most certainly waited to death. Were not the action of such external objects as threaten destruction to us, attended with

with pain, we should leap into either the fire or the sea, with the same indifference that we walk across the floor. Were not indulgence in those things which, though not immediately destructive to life, are still found to be prejudicial to health, attended with uneasiness, we should spend our short lives in constant gratifications, and never arrive at the age of maturity. Pain therefore is the guardian of all human creatures ; and were it not annexed to the reception of injuries, we could not exist even for a single moment ; to say, then, that men should live, and yet should be deprived of that which was necessary to their existence, is a contradiction in terms ; and no person imagines that Omnipotence can perform things which involve this as a consequence. Nor could power and goodness infinite have excluded moral evil.

I have already proved that man was a free agent, and have likewise shewn in what liberty consisted; now to suppose that a creature, endowed with imperfect powers of reason, and solicited to action by very ardent passions, should on every occasion reflect, in any degree, that he should ever form just conclusions, and that he should ever prefer contingent and future, to certain and present good, must be acknowledged an absolute impossibility, and consequently it could not have been effected by Omnipotence.

I am, in the last place, to inquire whether Omnipotence could have excluded evil by creating intelligences superior to humanity, yet notwithstanding material. Now no body can avoid being acted on by others, according to the known properties of matter;
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pain therefore must, in some degree, be necessary to the preservation of every material being. Nor is moral evil less necessary to such creatures.

We already observed, that passion was the property of every sentient being, as composed of matter, and that intuition was essential to pure spirits ; but no creature can divest itself of its essential properties, and acquire those of an opposite nature ; consequently, in every material and animated being passion must exist, error must take place, and moral evil must ensue. Yet does not the necessity of either natural or moral evil militate against a state of future felicity, since pleasure may be so predominant as to render the admixture of pain merely the mean of enhancing it : what man, for instance, would conceive that degree of it which attends on
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loosening the zone of a beautiful virgin, calculated for any purpose but that of converting delight into rapture. The admission of moral evil, in a small degree, will not be found more incompatible with a state of beatitude, since our greatest happiness consists in the hope of arriving at a still superior degree of perfection; now, did we never err, this hope would be cut off, and consequently a source of pleasure would be dried up.

It may be demanded, in the last place, since evil could not be entirely avoided, why were not such beings only created as were capable of the utmost degree of material felicity: Now, we already demonstrated that justice formed a part of the divine essence, but justice allows not exaltation without merit, and consequently the state of liberty or probation

probation must precede that of angelic beatitude. This explanation of the origin of evil, a subject so often litigated and so little understood, will, I conceive, throw light on another topic of equal obscurity, I mean that of prescience and predestination.

The reader must recollect that God has given us passions, which impel us to what is apparently, and reason which directs us to what is really good, leaving the decision entirely to ourselves. Now the schoolmen asserted, that Omnipotence could not make a stick without two ends, a supposition that he could, implying a contradiction in terms; but surely it implies no less to assert, that the divinity foreknows the consequences of man's voluntary actions, which depend on his determination between opposite motives.

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The intuitive knowledge, indeed, which the Deity possesses of the physical world, and his exact acquaintance with the characters of all moral agents, enable him generally to determine, both how the species and the individual will act; this perception is, however, acquired in no shape by intuition, and, according to our comprehensions, must still retain some shadow of that imperfection which prevails in the reasoning of men, when it relates to such actions as are likely to proceed from certain characters and motives. But if this may seem too hardy an assertion, I shall allow the Omniscience of the Deity, maintaining only, that it is acquired *a posteriori*, and not by intuition; in which case it includes no predestination, as proceeding from a knowledge of the characters of men, and not in any shape determining them. For instance, from
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an intimate and perfect acquaintance with the dispositions of moral agents, he certainly knows how each being, whose character is formed, will act when assailed by particular motives; but he cannot positively determine what will be the character of the embryo in the womb, and at best can form but a mere accurate judgment of it,

In the present acceptation of it, Omniscience means a knowledge of every thing which is to be known; and if any person wishes to make it extend beyond this, he must also desire that it should involve contradictions. The Deity knows by intuition whatever concerns the physical world, because he has given it immutable laws; but reason, the law of man, does not always insure an exact conformity to it. There is, of course, no pre-ordination
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in the moral world, nor does the Divinity deserve praise for our good, or blame for our bad actions.

I now proceed to Mr. Hume's last argument against Providence and a future state. Does justice exert itself in this world, then it is satisfied; does it not, your experience does not allow you to infer it? But must premise a few observations concerning the import of the first term. This expression indeed is very improperly applied with respect to human actions, as it has been already shewn that the Deity cannot foresee, or cannot have an intuitive knowledge of them. But Providence is of two kinds, general and especial; the one supposing laws laid down for inert matter, instinct given to brutes, reason to man, and an attention paid by the Deity to the good or evil use of the talents granted by him to rational creatures,

creatures, without the interference of reward or punishment in their present state of existence ; the other maintaining that God is immediately employed in the government, both of the physical and moral worlds, revenging evil, and rewarding good actions. The former is the providence of a philosopher, the latter of an old woman ; nor shall I argue against it, as the successful villainies of men are a too evident proof of the monstrous absurdities attending on the opinion. Now the former species of providence is necessarily connected with the Omniscience of God ; since if he were ignorant of human actions at the time of performance, he must be ignorant of things which were capable of being known, and thus is a superintendence clearly established : the justice of the divinity, and his grant of reason to us as a law, have also been heretofore proved. Why then does an

Omniscient and Omnipotent Being allow the infraction of it ? I reply, because prevention is impossible. Now impossibilities are of two kinds ; the one implying a negation of power in the being, which is to perform it, and the other a contradiction in the thing to be effected. Now to say that a matter is impossible in the latter sense, conveys not the smallest reflection on Omnipotence : but did God interfere by a special Providence, this would be attended with a moral constraint. Thus if the man, who in obedience to passion, and in contradiction to reason, walked out of his door, should break his leg at the very first step ; and if the whole of our experience, both with respect to our own conduct, and to that of others, informed us that punishment immediately followed each act of disobedience to this divine law, we should be obliged to

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to act by an extrinsically imposed moral necessity, and equally immutable with that which regulates the motions of the planets.

Since then the interference of God, though essentially just, in either rewarding or punishing men at present, must evidently be attended with a moral necessity of action, or of restraint in them, it evidently follows that the state of recompense, or of punishment, must be in future. How this may take place, can be clearly discerned by enlightened divines with the eye of faith; but unassisted reason can only perceive that, by obedience to her dictates, we imitate the perfections of the Deity, which oblige him to a moral necessity of action; that by subserviency to passion, we degrade ourselves to the level of the beasts, and ultimately tend to an imita-

imitation of matter, acting by a blind necessity of nature ; that consequently, in whatever degree we have courted elevation or depression, is the author of our existence bounden, by his justice, to second our wishes.

F I N I S.

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